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Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[25 May 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Deep concern about Anti-Roma Violence in Ukraine

On April 21, 2018 – according to information from the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) – 15 Roma families were driven away from their makeshift shelters in Lysa Hora, a nature reserve near Kiev, by members of the right-wing group C14. The armed gang of neo-Nazis chased the terrified parents and their children, who tried to escape the mob. While trying to escape, they were pelted with stones. (A video published on April 25 shows a group of masked white skinheads chasing Roma families.) The tents in which the families had lived were burnt down. We cannot be sure how many people were injured in the incident.

According to Zola Kondur, representative of the Chitikli Roma Foundation, the local population and the administration had tried to keep the Roma families away from the reserve for the last four years. Although the Roma had tried to blend in and to cooperate with the authorities, non-Roma residents in the district demanded that their Roma neighbors should not be allowed to use public transport or to shop in local stores. Kondur also accused the administration of the Holosiyiv district of keeping back the Roma families' benefits and of right-wing intimidation tactics.

According to information from the ERRC, the police (Goloseevskiy Police Department) initiated investigations and criminal proceedings after the video was published.

On May 9, 2018, a group of masked men set fire to a settlement of about 30 Roma (near the village of Rudne in the region of Lviv) and beat up the people living there. The National Police classified the incident as "hooliganism". "There is nobody living there any more at the moment. Most of the people fled from the violence in the middle of the night, and others were taken to the hospital," said Michael Kenio, spokesman of the local human rights organization Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group (KHRPG).

We are shocked by this new act of violence in Lviv, which is a clear sign of anti-Roma tendencies.
Ukraine ratified all important international conventions on the protection and the rights of minorities – but they have not yet been adequately implemented for all of the groups. The debate regarding these minorities was politicized, especially during the past few years, and the minorities themselves were manipulated and played off against each other. We are deeply worried. We have often spoken out against Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in recent years.

It is certainly in the interest of Ukraine and of all Ukrainian citizens that the Ukrainian judiciary and law enforcement authorities will respond immediately and hold the alleged perpetrators accountable. The attack in Lysa Hora is especially severe, because the perpetrators acted under the eyes of officials and the police, committing serious human rights violations against members of a vulnerable national minority. Several provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights were violated, including Article 1 (obligation to respect human rights), Article 2 (right to life), Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination), as well as the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Therefore, the Society for Threatened Peoples calls upon the UN Human Rights Council to appeal to the Ukrainian government to strongly condemn intolerance and anti-Roma tendencies, to give justice to those affected, and to protect them.

The Kiev government should be called upon not to tolerate such barbaric attacks and to do everything in its power to ensure that the Roma can feel safe in Ukraine. Further, the Ukrainian government must ensure that the displaced Roma families will be provided with adequate and decent accommodation, and that they will be appropriately compensated and taken care of.